United States Department of Education – Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE)
Improving Program Performance through Accountability:
Logistical Support for Perkins Implementation
Contract # ED-08-CO-0113

Rigorous Programs of Study - Evaluation Design Panel Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 14, 2010
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time

Potomac Center Plaza Bulding
550 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Rigorous Programs of Study Evaluation Design Panel:

- Emily Anthony – National Center for Education Statistics
- Kim Green – National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
- Steve Klein – MPR Associates, Inc.
- Sharon Miller – Office of Vocational and Adult Education
- Jay Pfeiffer – MPR Associates, Inc.
- Ryan Rowe – Lenawee Intermediate School District Tech Center
- Marsha Silverberg – Institute of Education Sciences
- Jim Stone – National Research Center for Career and Technical Education
- John Townsend – Tennesse Board of Regents
- Johan Uvin – Office of Vocational and Adult Education

The purpose of the meeting was to cultivate and provide an open forum for Evaluation Design Panel members to review, discuss, and agree on focused methodologies that will promote and improve state and local development and implementation of rigorous career and technical education (CTE) programs of study (POS).

The meeting began with a welcome by OVAE's Assistant Secretary Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier followed by introductions from each Evaluation Design Panel member. The Director of the Division of Academic and Technical Education, Dr. Sharon Lee Miller, introduced and asked the Panel members to share their hopes and concerns for this meeting. The resounding themes targeted the need for consistency of definition and language for programs of study, as well as common data available for collection among the POS states.

The panel's discussion was guided by the *Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study - Evaluation Considerations Background Paper* that details the research questions underlying a proposed evaluation, outlines a methodological approach for collecting research data, and summarizes key issues affecting the evaluation. As a result the following facilitated topics were discussed:

- Research Questions – rather than measuring the effectiveness of technical assistance provided by states to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), the questions should ask what states are doing to help create rigorous programs of study. These questions should be addressed locally and at the state level. Outcome Measures need to be further discussed, but need to include how each of the 10 Framework components contributes to student progress and performance. In order to evaluate Implementation Measures, the number and characteristics of students that participate in POS within LEAs and partnering postsecondary institutions must be identified.

- Evaluation Framework – because there are so many questions around the definition of a POS and CTE, and student participation is defined differently at each POS site, further work is needed. It was suggested that basic parameters and timeframes be provided to determine what course levels and historical data are available. Also, the Panel discussed the need for a self-assessment system to be in place.

- Issues for Consideration – issues to consider included: Defining Student Populations, Defining Comparison Populations, Controlling for POS Quality, Measuring Student and Program Outcomes, and Data Collection. When discussing the issue of Defining Student Populations, it was determined that the first technical course that a participant takes will be the trigger that determines a POS student, ultimately defined by the LEA. A suggestion was made that the Concentrator definition could be used because states are already accustomed to it. When discussing the issue of Defining Comparison Populations, it was suggested that comparisons should occur within the same district and within the same programs. The panel acknowledged that while an outcomes study would be a preferred and useful approach to assessing the value of POS, it was unlikely that the states and/or identified local agencies within states possessed the data to allow a rigorous outcomes study to occur. It was suggested that the study be approached first by attempting to perform a rigorous outcomes study and, if the data doesn't exist, take a second approach of performing an implementation study. The implementation study would examine how states are implementing RPOS, the components that they lack or technical assistance needed to strengthen their programs, and the results of their efforts to put RPOS in place. While reviewing the issue of Controlling for POS Quality, it was noted that self-assessments should be done at each site for all 18 evaluation sites, or possibly that a single research team perform the assessments. The assessment would need to include questions such as how many schools are providing POS and what sorts of evaluations had been previously completed, if any. There also needs to be a process in place to test the fidelity of local implementations. Currently there are seven performance measures.

As a result of the discussion, it was determined that there were more questions needing further discussion. All of the POS grantees must demonstrate the same level of rigorous requirements. In addition, there are some operational challenges that need to be addressed as part of the evaluation methodology. For the purpose of identifying overlap for the identified measures, and those used for reporting, the POS definition should be broader. Following are action items from the meeting:

- Develop a self-assessment/matrix in order to begin data collection,

- Have some final indication of what each state's POS is before December 2010,

- Perform a data audit to identify the data sources and other instruments/surveys that may need to be developed for each grantee, and

- Hold a project evaluation design meeting with the project directors of the Promoting Rigorous Career and Technical Education Programs of Study Program in December 2010. The six states awarded include Arizona, Kansas, Maryland, Montana, Utah, and Wisconsin.

The meeting proved that there is ongoing work concerning evaluation methodology of POS. In order for states to move forward, clear guidelines and expectations need to be defined in terms of evaluating their programs. Professional development, guidance, and technical assistance are potential ways to ensure these expectations are met.